

# Planning Scout Casualty Evacuation

by Captain Geoffrey A. Norman

3 September, 2330 hours, Porta Potti Wadi, Republic of Mojavia:

*Darkness set in almost 4 hours ago as Sergeant Smith's scout section moved south down a large wadi and neared observation point (OP) 2B. His two M1025 scout HMMWVs made little noise, but it seemed deafening from inside the truck where he was sitting. Suddenly, a bright flash washed out his night vision goggles as a rocket-propelled grenade slammed into his wingman's truck 50 meters to his front. A moment later, another explosion from a command-detonated mine blasted a crater in the trail between his two trucks and sent a hail of rock and debris through Smith's hood, radiator, windshields — and gunner.*

*In an instant, his focus shifted from reconnaissance to survival. Smith knew that his section's only chances rested with rapid casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) — but what was the scout CASEVAC plan?*

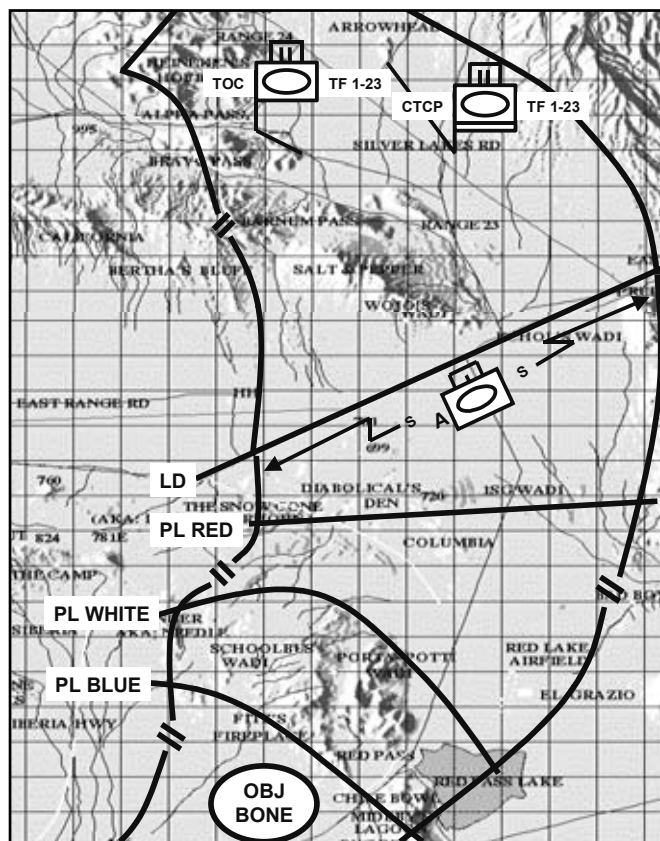
U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 17-98, *Scout Platoon*, states the “treatment and evacuation of wounded personnel are two of the most difficult tasks the scout platoon must execute. This is particularly true for the battalion scout platoon.”<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, at the National Training Center, scouts die from wounds in very high numbers. However, proactive officers and noncommissioned officers in nearly every scout platoon work diligently to overcome their organization's shortcomings and successfully execute their CASEVAC tasks. Some of their creative solutions include using a cargo HMMWV or 5-ton truck for resupply and CASEVAC, assigning medics to the scout platoons as drivers or dismounts, and maximizing the combat lifesaver qualifications of their 19Ds.

These efforts and ideas greatly improve the scout platoon's ability to rapidly treat and transport casualties. Yet, these measures alone will not ensure successful CASEVAC — the scout platoon needs the support of the task force (TF) S4 to save lives.

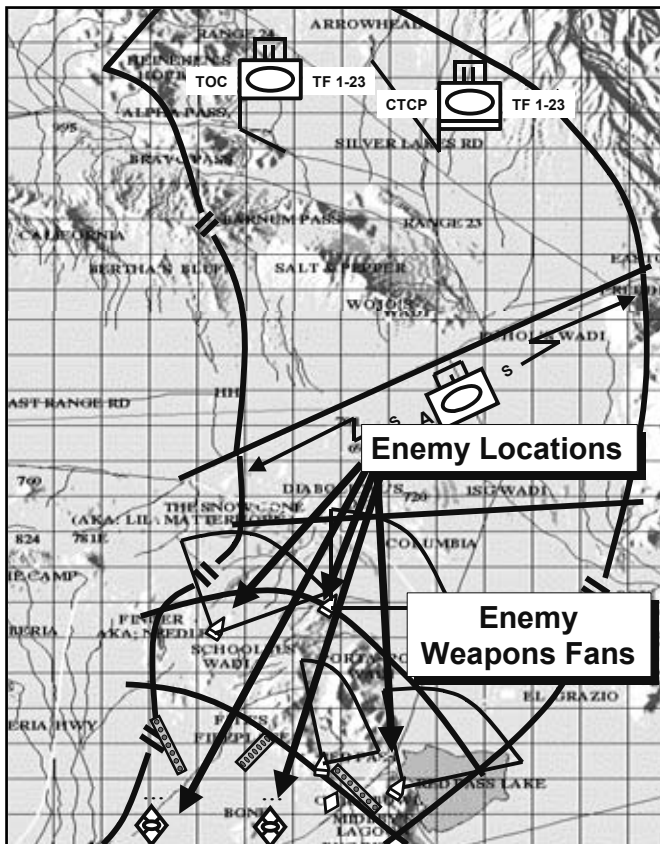
The S4 is responsible for planning combat service support (CSS) operations, including CASEVAC. The S4 may receive assistance from the S1 or medical platoon leader. However, the S4 normally does not participate in reconnaissance and surveillance (R&S) planning. This R&S planning results in Annex L of the operations order and serves as the basis for the scout platoon's plan. If the S4 fails to participate in the

process, scouts like Smith are left with casualties forward of the line of departure (LD) in the middle of the night asking, “what was the scout CASEVAC plan?”

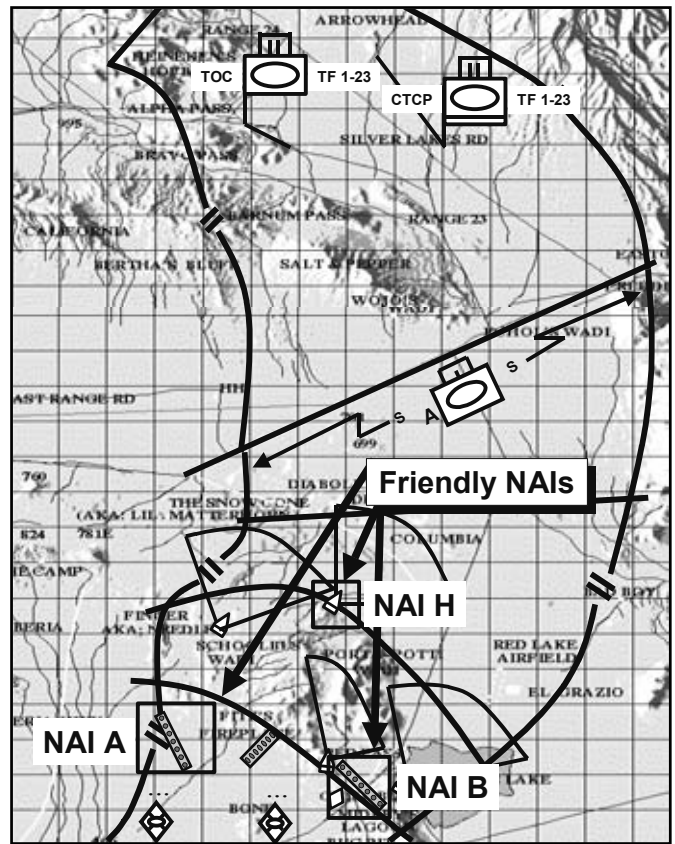
How do S4's plan scout CASEVAC? No single doctrinal reference spells out how to plan battalion scout platoon CASEVAC. However, the following 12-step method combines principles from several doctrinal manuals, which enables S4s to thoroughly and efficiently plan scout CASEVAC.



Step 1. TF AO and Base Graphics



**Step 2.** Template Enemy Locations



**Step 3.** Template Friendly NAIs

**Step 1.** The S4 must participate in R&S planning. The S2, S3, and fire support officer (FSO) are too busy to plan CSS in the S4's absence. So the S4 must be present, make himself relevant, and develop a sound CASEVAC plan. All it takes is a map, some acetate, and a few alcohol pens.

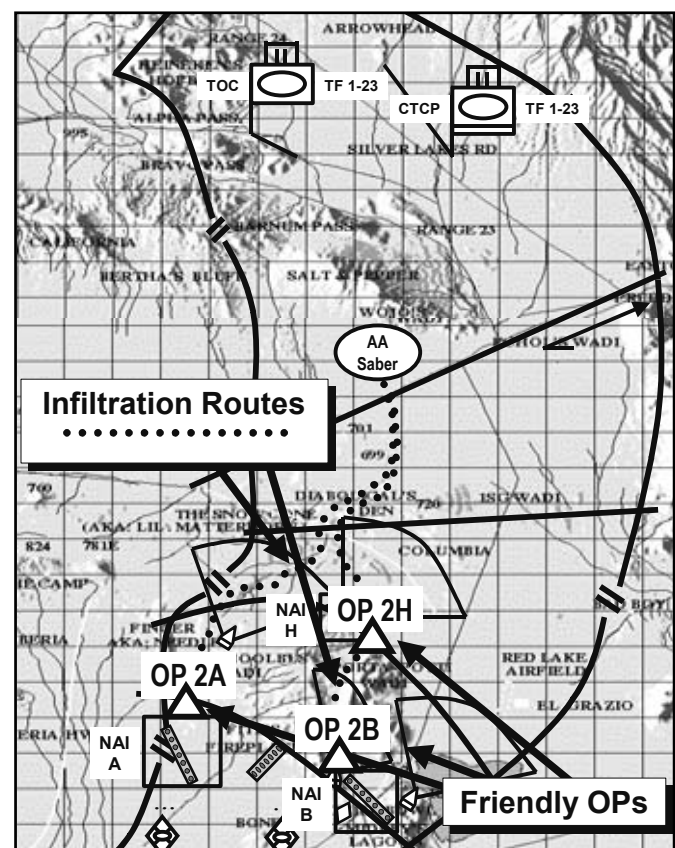
**Step 2.** Template enemy positions and weapons/observation ranges. The S2 and scout platoon leader will likely do this. The S4's endstate for this step is an overlay with known and probable enemy locations plotted in red — a refined situational template (SITTEMP). This should include nested range fans depicting the enemy's observation ranges during daylight and limited visibility, and weapons ranges for his direct and indirect fire systems.

**Step 3.** Template named areas of interest (NAIs) and reconnaissance objectives. The S2, S3, and scout platoon leader establish NAIs based on the commander's priority intelligence requirements (PIR) and other factors. The S4 posts these on his overlay in black.

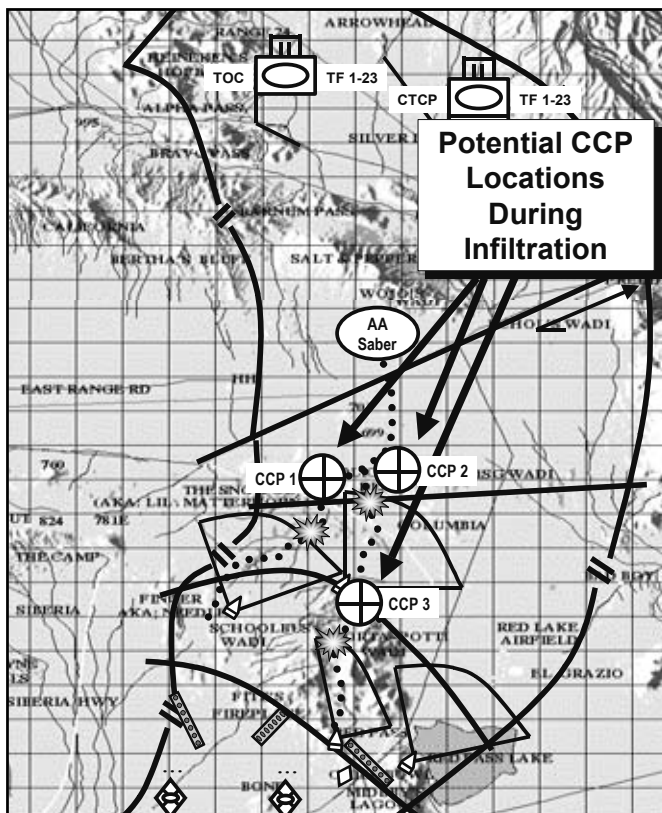
**Step 4.** Template projected scout OP locations. The scout platoon leader and S3 analyze the terrain near the NAIs or reconnaissance objectives, consider his capabilities and vulnerabilities, and determine where to place the OPs. The S4 adds these OP locations to his overlay in black.

**Step 5.** Identify scout infiltration routes. The scout platoon leader now knows where his scouts must go. He must then find routes (mounted and/or dismounted) to get them to their OPs. The scout platoon leader identifies these routes and the S4 adds them to his overlay as dashed black lines.

**Step 6.** Template scout casualty collection point (CCP) locations. The scout platoon leader and S4 determine where the scouts will make contact along their routes. They consider



**Steps 4 & 5.** Identify Friendly Ops and Infiltration Routes



**Step 6.** Identify Potential CCPs

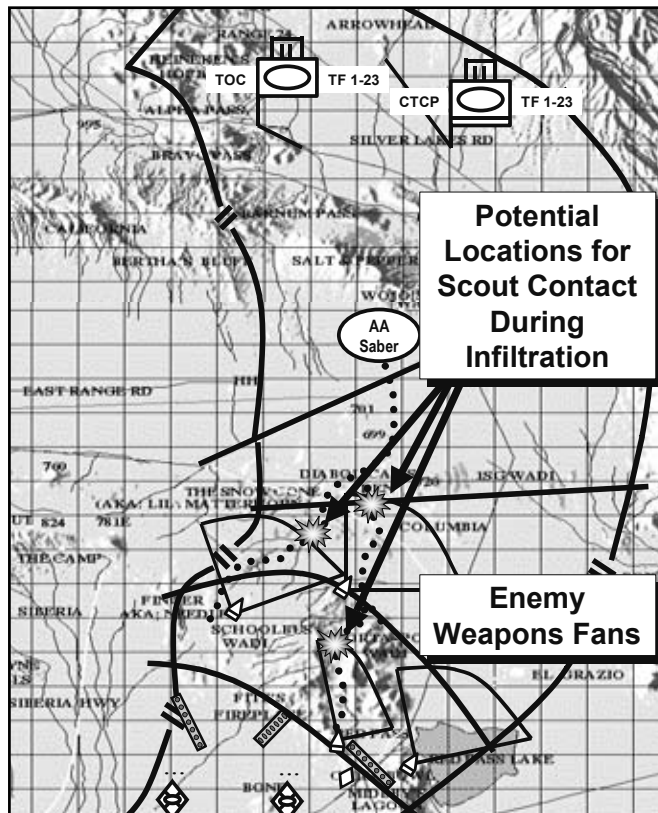
several factors to make this determination. First, are scouts infiltrating during daylight or during hours of limited visibility? The answer will tell them which enemy observation fan to use. Second, where do our infiltration routes intersect the enemy's observation and weapons ranges? These two factors will allow the scout platoon leader and S4 to establish locations of probable contact along the routes or in their OPs. The S4 marks these locations on his overlay in red.

The S4 and scout platoon leader then analyze the terrain near the points of probable contact to find terrain that offers concealment for templated CCPs. Once they find these, the S4 posts them on his overlay in black.

**Step 7.** Project scout casualties. The scout platoon leader and S4 now know where the scouts may make contact and sustain casualties. Now they must estimate the type and number of casualties using several considerations. First, will the scouts be mounted or dismounted at the points of probable contact? Second, what type of weapons will engage the scouts at the points of probable contact? The S4 and scout platoon leader can estimate the effects of the enemy contact by answering these questions and assessing other factors affecting the scouts' vulnerability.

A general rule of thumb for a crew making direct fire contact while mounted is one litter urgent or priority casualty, one walking wounded casualty, and the rest of the crew are routine casualties. The scout platoon will probably make contact along two-thirds of its routes. This means that a six-truck platoon using three routes may sustain four litter casualties, four walking wounded casualties, and between four to eight routine casualties.

**Step 8.** Identify standard and nonstandard evacuation requirements and assign responsibility. The S4 knows that the scout platoon may have up to four litter casualties needing



**Step 7.** Project Scout Casualties

rapid evacuation. Each M1025/6 scout HMMWV can carry only one litter casualty and does so at the expense of its reconnaissance mission. Each M113 ambulance or M996 front-line ambulance can carry up to four litter casualties. However, the S4 may not have resources to attach an ambulance to the scout platoon. In this case, he may have to rely on nonstandard casualty evacuation vehicles to transport the scout casualties from their CCP to the aid station. In a non-standard casualty evacuation role, an M998 cargo HMMWV with troop seats can carry three litters; an M1078 light medium tactical vehicle holds up to eight litters; and an M1095 medium tactical vehicle or an M923 5-ton holds up to 12 litters.

The S4 will probably have to rely on nonstandard evacuation vehicles based on the availability of the TF's standard evacuation assets. The S4 contacts the headquarters and headquarters company commander or support platoon leader to verify the feasibility of using one of their trucks. He then assigns responsibility to whoever will provide the truck and coordinates its linkup with the scout platoon.

**Step 9.** Assign escort responsibility to a company team. Unarmed and unescorted evacuation vehicles will likely suffer the same fate as the scout's vehicles if they move forward to a CCP. Using a tank section to escort an evacuation vehicle to a CCP offers many advantages. First, an enemy observer will be reluctant to engage a tank section with direct fire since that would reveal his location and draw lethal 120mm cannon and machinegun fire. Second, the thermal sights, high quality optics, frequency-modulated communications, and enhanced navigation systems enable the tank section and evacuation vehicle to quickly communicate with, identify, and move to the CCP during daylight or limited visibility conditions. Third, once at the CCP, the tanks continue to provide security and loaders can assist as litter bearers as necessary.

Escort forward using a tank section makes up one of the most crucial pieces of the scout CASEVAC puzzle and may require the involvement of the TF S3, XO, or commander. The TF needs implicit approval from its higher headquarters to launch this tank section to escort the CASEVAC vehicles forward of the line of departure or main battle area. The scouts will probably die from their wounds if the TF waits for brigade approval, which tends to occur more slowly at night when scouts will likely sustain casualties.

Utility helicopters, such as UH-60 Blackhawks and CH-47 Chinooks, are a precious and very limited asset. The S4 and scout platoon leader must understand that brigade will not release these aircraft to fly forward of the line of departure to

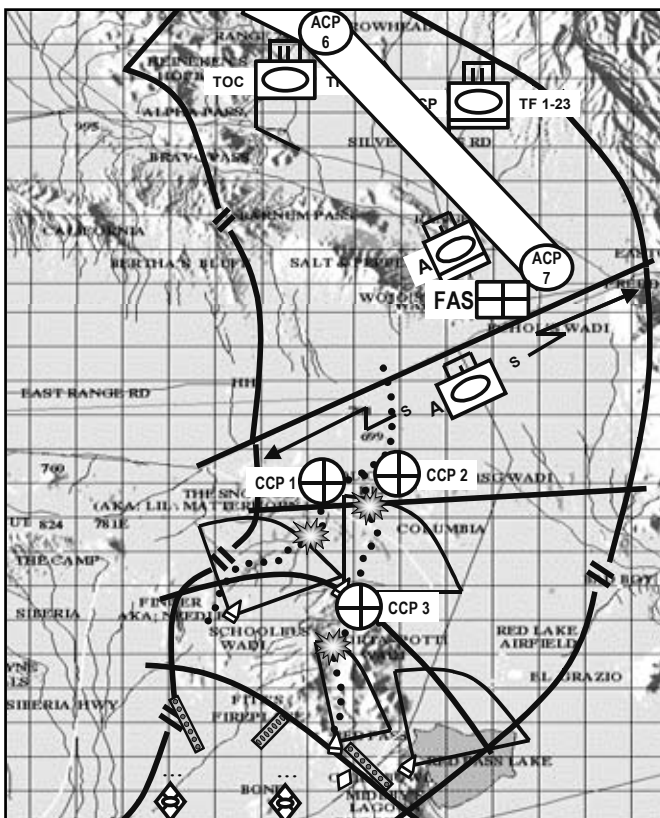
**Step 11.** Aggressively disseminate plan to key players and rehearse. The S4 formalizes the scout CASEVAC plan focusing on infiltration routes, CCP locations, standard and nonstandard vehicle requirements and responsibility, escort unit composition and responsibility, aid station location, and command and control plans and responsibilities. The S4 includes this information in Annex L, but that is not enough. He must publish a fragmentary order (FRAGO) for the support of scout CASEVAC. This FRAGO must be disseminated as soon as possible to allow all parties time to meet their requirements before the scouts cross the line of departure.

**Step 12.** S4 manages scout CASEVAC during execution. Now that the S4 has developed, disseminated, and rehearsed the CASEVAC plan, he must decide how to manage it. He may choose to personally manage it or have his night CSS battle captain or the S1 manage it. They may decide to manage scout CASEVAC from the combat trains command post and must be in position to maintain communications with the scouts, escort unit, and aid station. Whether the S1 or S4 manages CASEVAC, and from where it is managed is immaterial, as long as someone other than the scout platoon sergeant manages it. The scout platoon sergeant will ensure his casualties make it to a CCP then the TF CSS leadership manage their evacuation as a TF-level fight.

Successful scout CASEVAC involves more than just the scout platoon. The TF S4 plays an essential role in synchronizing the various elements, which come together to save the lives of wounded scouts. Rapid and efficient CASEVAC allows them to continue their mission and fight another day. Leaders owe the scouts a well-conceived and well-resourced plan to evacuate their casualties.

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Army Field Manual 17-98, *Scout Platoon*, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 10 April 1999.

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